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PETITION

OF

MRS. CAROLINE M. THOMPSON,

OF MASSACHUSETTS,

TO THE

HON. THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW-YORK,

IN AID OF THE

WOMAN'S HOSPITAL.

ALBANY:

WEED, PARSONS & COMPANY, PRINTERS.

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SPRINGFIELD, MASS., *March 28, 1857.*

MY DEAR SIR:

In my humble judgment it would be well if the address, which my wife herewith sends through you to the Committee of Ways and Means, were printed in pamphlet form, and circulated amongst the members of the legislature.

It is a strong appeal, as strong as it is truthful, and must be felt by every man who has a heart to feel or a head to understand.

Wishing you God speed in the noble cause to which your life is so heroically dedicated, I remain, ever yours,

JAMES M. THOMPSON.

To

J. MARION SIMS, M. D.,

Surgeon to the Woman's Hospital, New-York.

TO THE
HON. THE LEGISLATURE
OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

GENTLEMEN :

I have appeared before your Committee of Ways and Means, on the claims of the Woman's Hospital to state patronage—but as I cannot talk with all of you, will you permit me to write, and thus appeal directly to every member of your honorable body?

I feel that you are only to realize the want and value of such an institution, and your whole hearts and sympathies will respond to my petition.

You are well aware that the number and variety of diseases peculiar to my sex are without limit. Their name is legion; and many of them were entirely incurable till the establishment of the present Woman's Hospital in the city of New-York.

The origin and history of this institution are, I take it for granted, familiar to all of you; and the benefits it bestows upon suffering women have only to be known, to make the State of New-York feel proud to adopt it as her own. Go to its wards, as I have often done, and there behold women from all parts of our country—of all ages and conditions of life, from the young and lovely girl of seventeen, up to the dilapidated and soul-sick matron of sixty-two—all, all restored to health, after many long years of sorrow and suffering.

I have there seen heart-broken mothers made whole in a few days, even after 25, 30, 35, and in one instance 36 years of agony, mortification and distress, that no mere man can possibly understand. In all these cases the poor sufferers were depressed and unhappy beyond degree—many of them a charge upon the state, and a loathsome burthen to themselves, and to all around them.

In restoring them to the enjoyment of perfect health, mothers were restored to their children, wives to their husbands, and women to their homes and to usefulness.

How many of you, in your experience of life, have seen unhappy mothers and desolate homes. In many cases, the wife who had before been well, cheerful, useful and happy, from some cause unknown to herself, loses her health. Her nerves are irritated and her mind clouded. When the husband comes home from his daily toil, the wife, suffering and nervous, fails to meet him with her usual happy welcome. She was once the light of his home, but she now seems to cast a dark shadow over it. Gentlemen, you all know that if home be not the brightest spot on earth to man, if he does not find peace, comfort, rest and sympathy there, he will seek consolation and amusement elsewhere; and woe to the wife whose husband finds more attractive places than his own home can offer. Younger and fairer faces smile upon and welcome him, and in the excitements of society, and, it may be, of dissipation, he seeks to forget his cares and drown his sorrows.

You all know such cases, but few of you know the cause.

These female troubles come to all classes and conditions. Because your wife, daughter, sisters and mother are refined, cultivated and intelligent, they are no more exempt from suffering than are their poorer sisters in the humbler walks of life. Do not understand me as saying that *all* the unhappiness of married life arises solely from the ill health of the wife, but in very many cases such is the fact.

Among our higher classes, the mother is often unable, from loss of health, to take that care of her children that every

child needs, and they are consequently turned over to the tender mercies of a hired nurse. I need not tell you of the deplorable consequences of this want of early training, whereby thousands of giddy headed romantic young women, and fast young men are turned loose upon society, ruining themselves, and wringing the hearts of all who love them.

While among the poorer classes, the mother (sick possibly because she became a mother), with feeble body, throbbing nerves and weakened mind, must necessarily neglect her children. Unable even to provide a nurse, she involuntarily allows them to grow up in ignorance and vice, and in due time they become inmates of the alms-house, the lunatic asylum, the jail and the state prison. In such cases the state must support them. Is it not a true and wise economy to prevent these evils?

Give wives and mothers health, and they can then be such wives and mothers as will make home happy, and rear virtuous sons and daughters for the state. To do this—carry out the plans of the munificent founders of the present Woman's Hospital—adopt it as a state institution, give it enlargement and permanence; provide free beds for every county in the state; open wide its doors to suffering woman, wherever you find her; give the whole medical profession free access to its wards, that they may be profited by its teachings; and, gentlemen, a light shall rise from this institution that shall illumine the world, and shed a halo of glory around the great Empire State, that must grow brighter as time grows older. Believe me it is no ideal dream when I say, that the time will come, that, instead of sending your young men to Paris and London to perfect their medical education, France and Great Britain may yet send their students to our own country for this purpose.

Gentlemen, this is no common claim—it comes home to you all. You can look back to the days of your boyhood. You remember your devoted mother. To that mother's counsels, her influence and her prayers, you owe your present high position, all that you are, and all that you hope to be.

come. In that mother's name, for her sake, grant the aid now invoked for the cause of her suffering sisters.

Sickness, when it comes to us, is hard enough to bear, even when surrounded with every comfort that money can buy. How much worse must it be when sickness and poverty are combined? You love your gentle wife; when she is touched with pain and disease, you do all your kind nature dictates to comfort and restore her; and you have the deepest gratitude of her heart. Many a poor woman's sufferings are known only to her own heart, and her Creator.

The more the treatment of the diseases peculiar to woman is understood, the less will be her sufferings, the sooner will be her cure. And this is the great mission of the WOMAN'S HOSPITAL.

GENTLEMEN! REPUBLICANS! DEMOCRATS! AMERICANS! Do you wish to distinguish the present session of your Legislature? Grant the aid now asked for the WOMAN'S HOSPITAL, and, for the remainder of your days, you will look back upon this deed with pride; you will build for yourselves a monument in the hearts of women more durable than granite—more valuable than gold.

Do you wonder at the interest I feel for my sex? Let me tell you my story. At the early age of 22, in the morning of my life, when everything seemed brightest to me, my troubles came. They date back to the birth of my child; my injuries were terrible, my sufferings unspeakable. I was among strangers—motherless—and at that time my husband was far from home. I had a devoted husband, a dear, good father, and a loving sister. I went home to that father and sister, and my husband was soon by my side to cheer and comfort me. They did all that they could for my relief. Skilful surgeons were employed, and the advice of eminent physicians was sought, but all in vain. Nothing could be done for me. I knew that I must suffer, and could only hope for better days to come. I lived in the future; I lived in the firm faith that I should some day be cured. This faith alone sustained me. I knew

that in God's own time a remedy would be found for me. I trusted not in vain. After sixteen years of the greatest anguish and suffering, known only to my God and my own heart, a messenger of good tidings came to me. She was a stranger, but a sister in suffering. She told me of the Woman's Hospital in New-York, and of the wonderful cures there effected. I believed her—and am once more restored to my sex, my husband, my child and my home. I can enjoy life, and again take my part in the great concerns of the world. My dear father died before I was cured; but if spirits are permitted to know of the welfare of those they have loved on earth, he daily rejoices with me in my restoration to health. All the return I can make to my Heavenly Father for his goodness to me—all the gratitude I can pay to the noble founders of the Woman's Hospital—is to plead for my suffering sisters.

Gentlemen—to your noble hearts, your generous nature, your chivalry and your gallantry I appeal. To your strength of mind and firmness of purpose, I bring my weakness and dependence. At the feet of your manly nature, I lay the self-devotion—the womanly hearts of my sex. In woman's weakness lies her truest strength. Will you, can you, close your ears to my appeal? I know you cannot. I know you will not. Every generous impulse in your nature will plead for me, and I can trust this cause to you.

Gentlemen—in this matter I have no personal object to gain, no local interest to serve. I am a native of Boston. I live in Massachusetts. Out of the abundance of my heart my mouth has spoken. Have I appealed in vain? I have come to you to tell you the truth. As a sister would plead with her brothers, I speak to you. Let me, a Boston woman, be proud of my New-York brothers. I trust every true man amongst you will vote for this bill.

Dr. Sims and his friends do not ask an immediate appropriation. They ask only the fostering care of the state, which you must all see it is plainly her duty to give.

May God bless and prosper you in every good word and work.
May you return in safety to your homes, and may your domestic happiness be perfect and entire.

In behalf of my sex, I subscribe myself,

Very truly, your sister,

CAROLINE M. THOMPSON.

SPRINGFIELD, Mass., *March 28th, 1857.*

